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Berkowicz

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(54) **FOLDING SEAT MODULE SYSTEM AND METHOD OF USING SAME**

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(51) **Int. Cl.**[7] **A47C 15/00**

(52) **U.S. Cl.** **297/248**; 297/31; 297/16; 297/188.04; 297/232; 297/249; 297/257; 297/239; 297/440.14; 211/85.8; 211/133.1; 211/13.1

(58) **Field of Search** 297/248, 31, 16, 297/188.04, 232, 249, 257, 239, 440.14; 211/13.1, 85.8, 133.1, 134; 280/79.3

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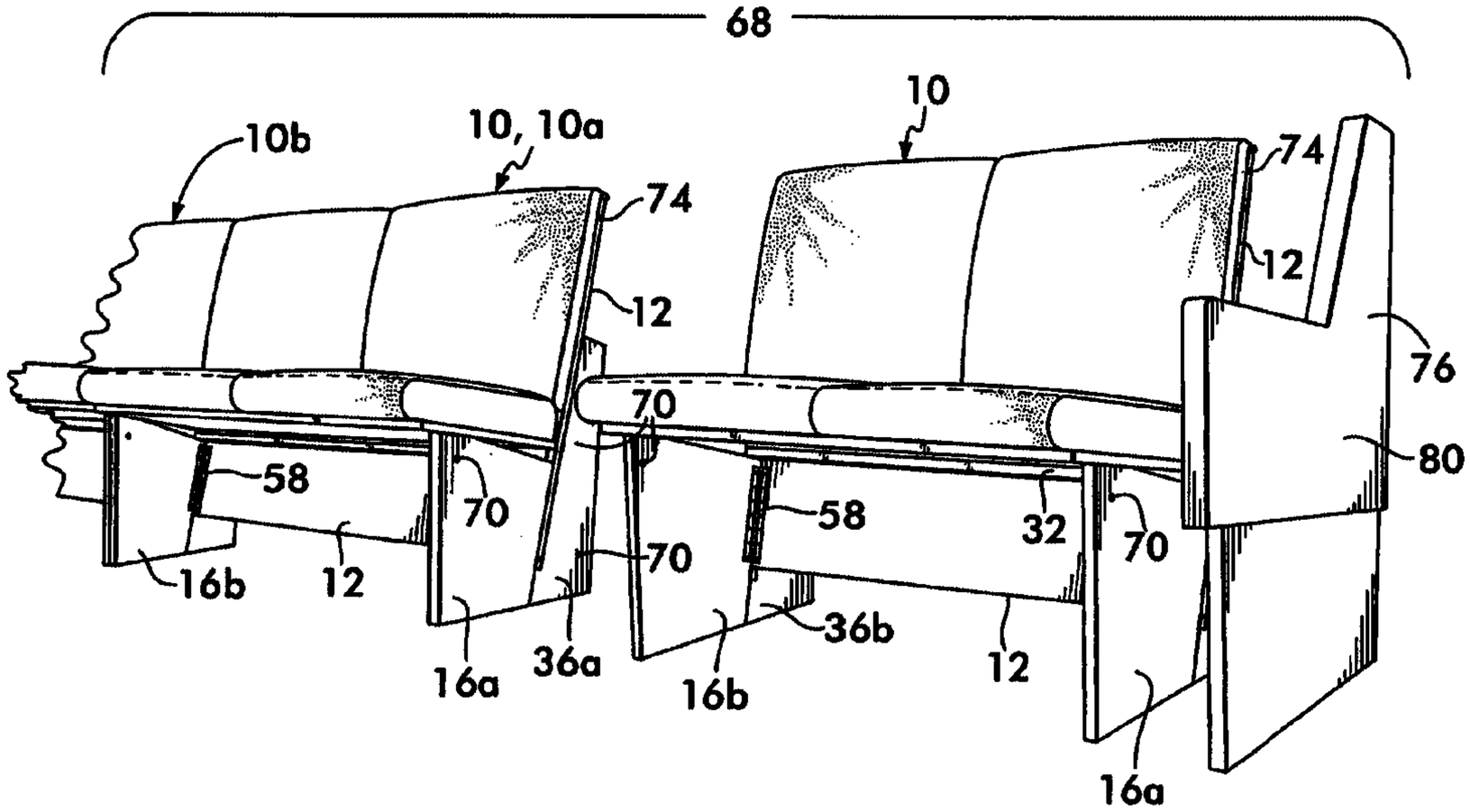
(57) **ABSTRACT**

A portable seating system having a seat module that is foldable between an upright position and a folded position for storage. Multiple up righted modules are connectable to one another to form a row of seat modules. A method of providing portable seating which can be set up for use and then removed for storage is also provided.

26 Claims, 14 Drawing Sheets



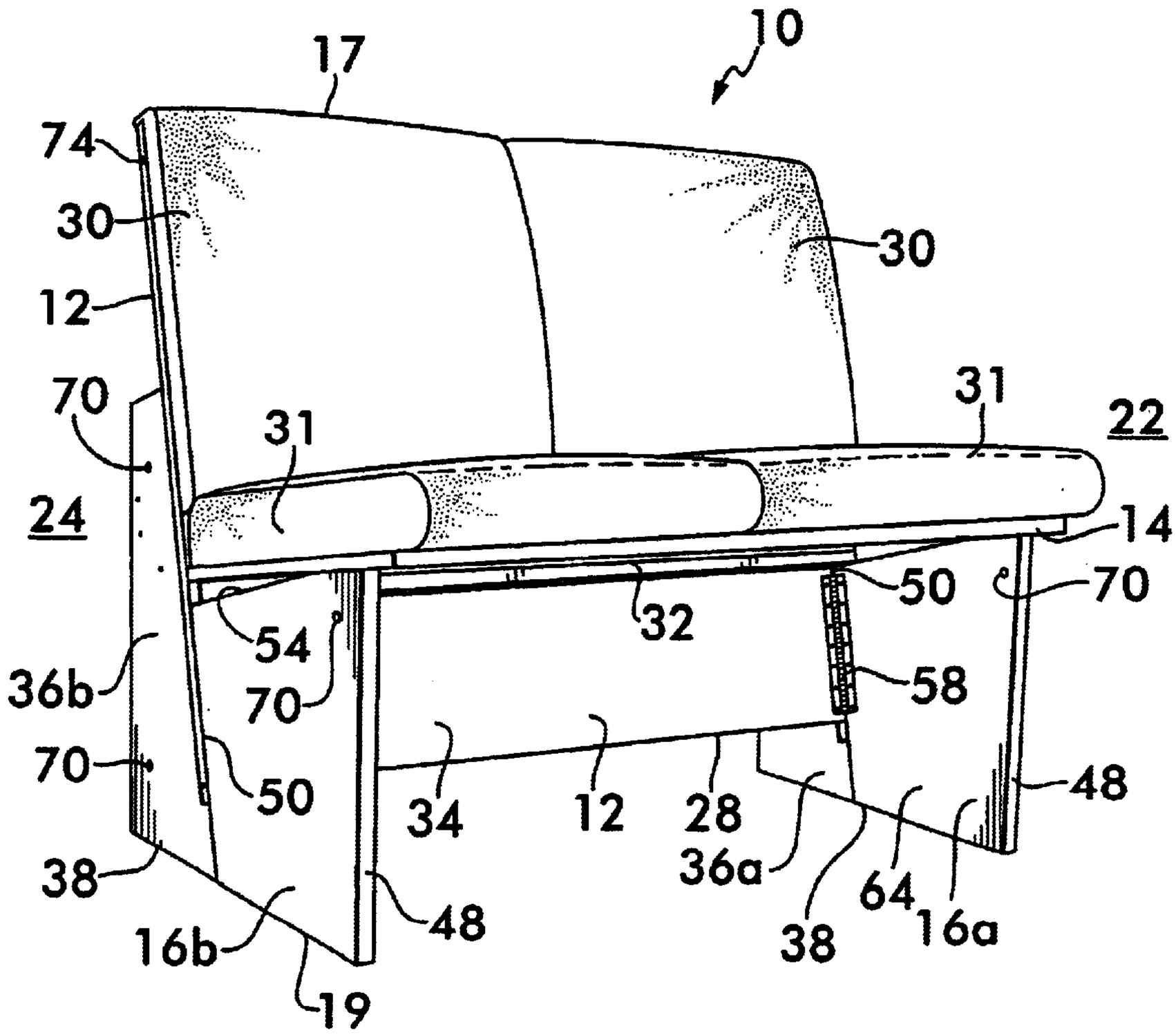

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FIG.1

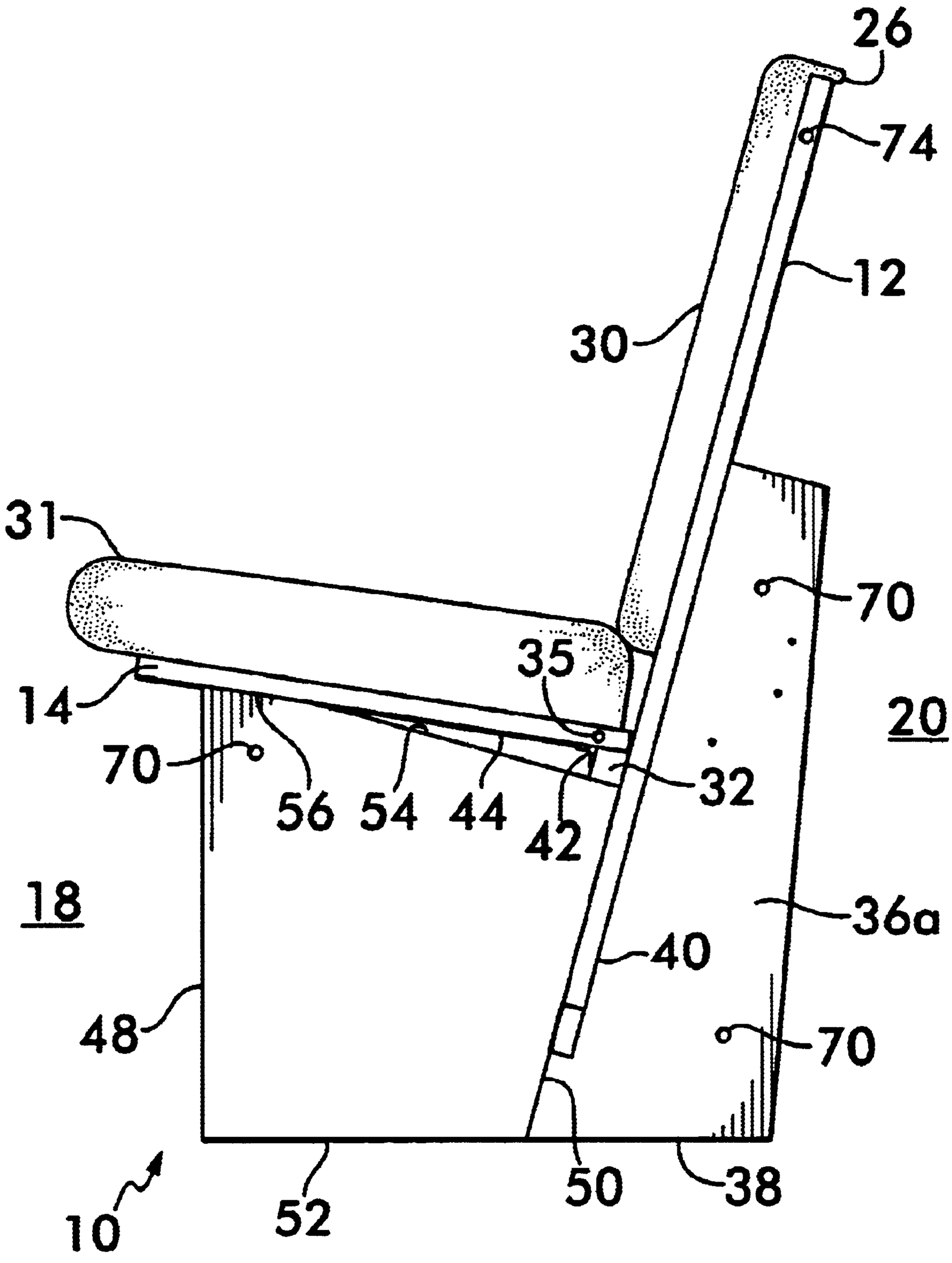

FIG.2

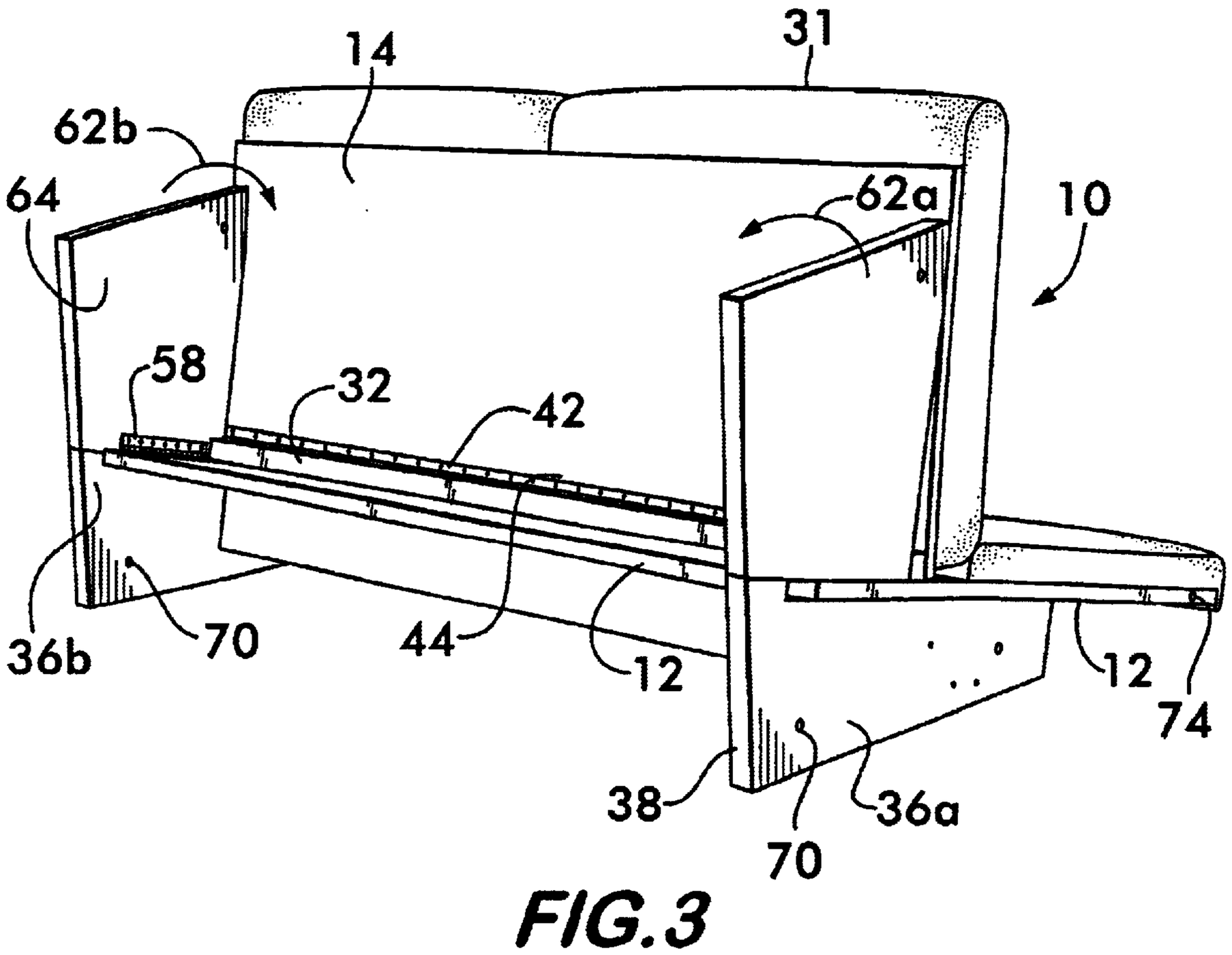

FIG.3

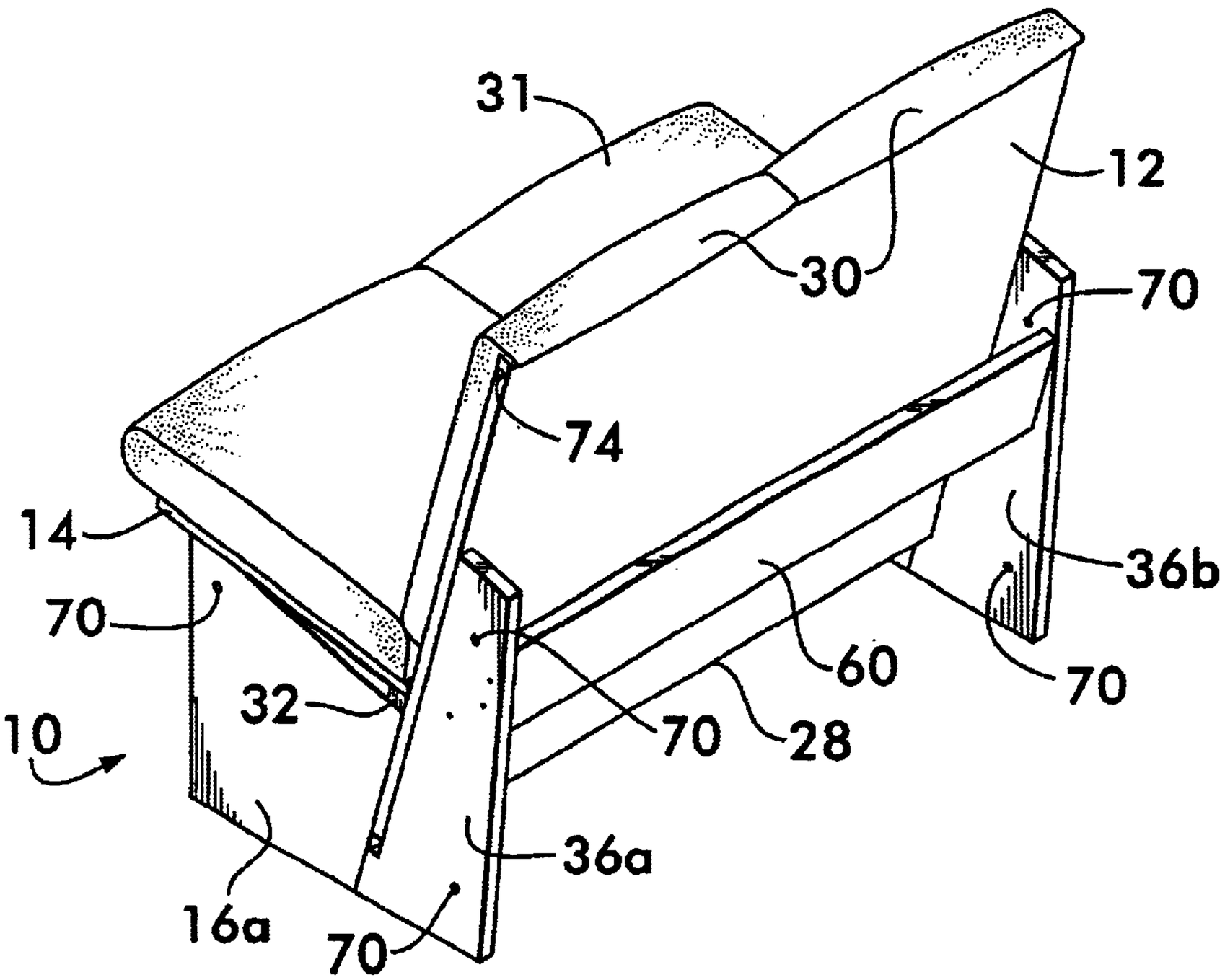

FIG.4

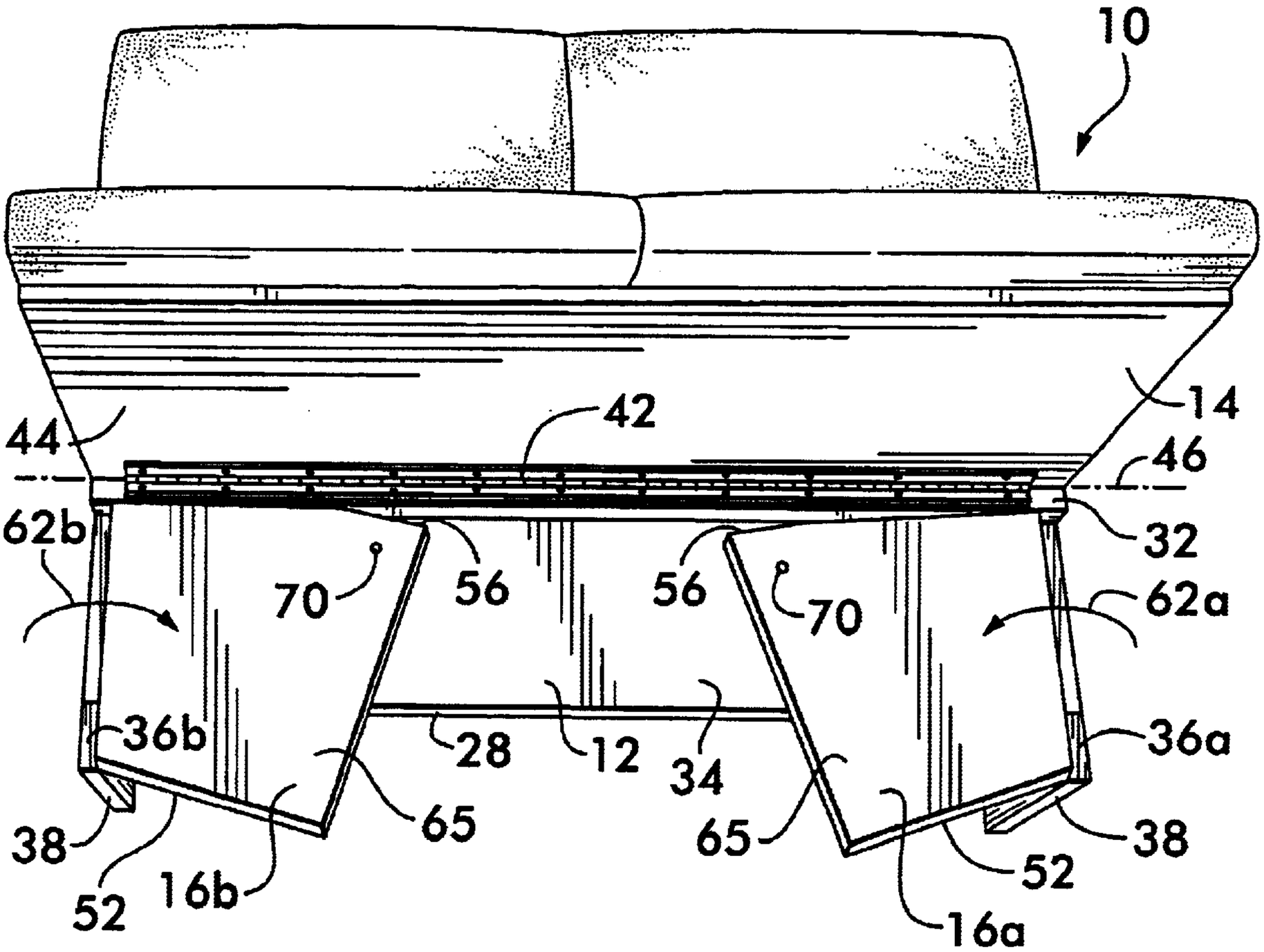
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FIG.5

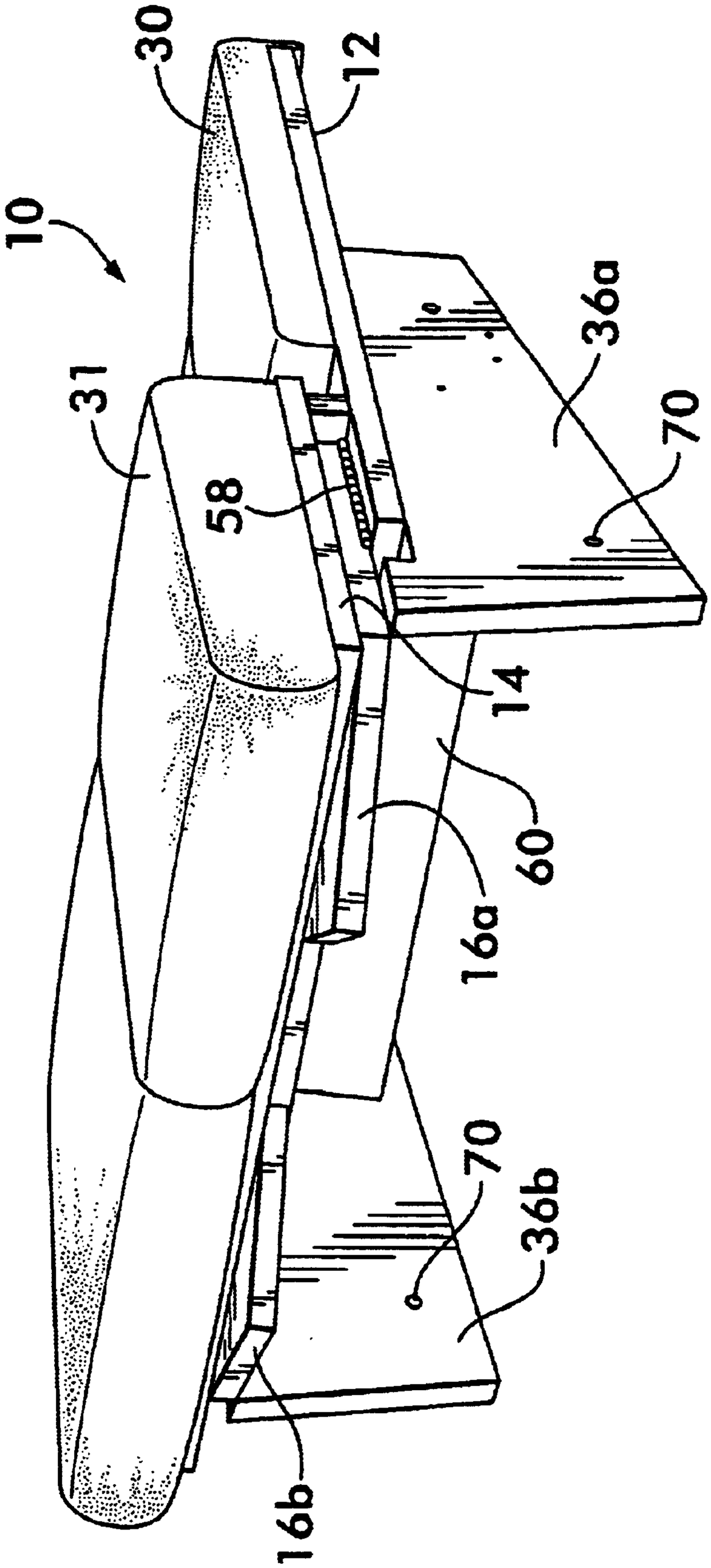
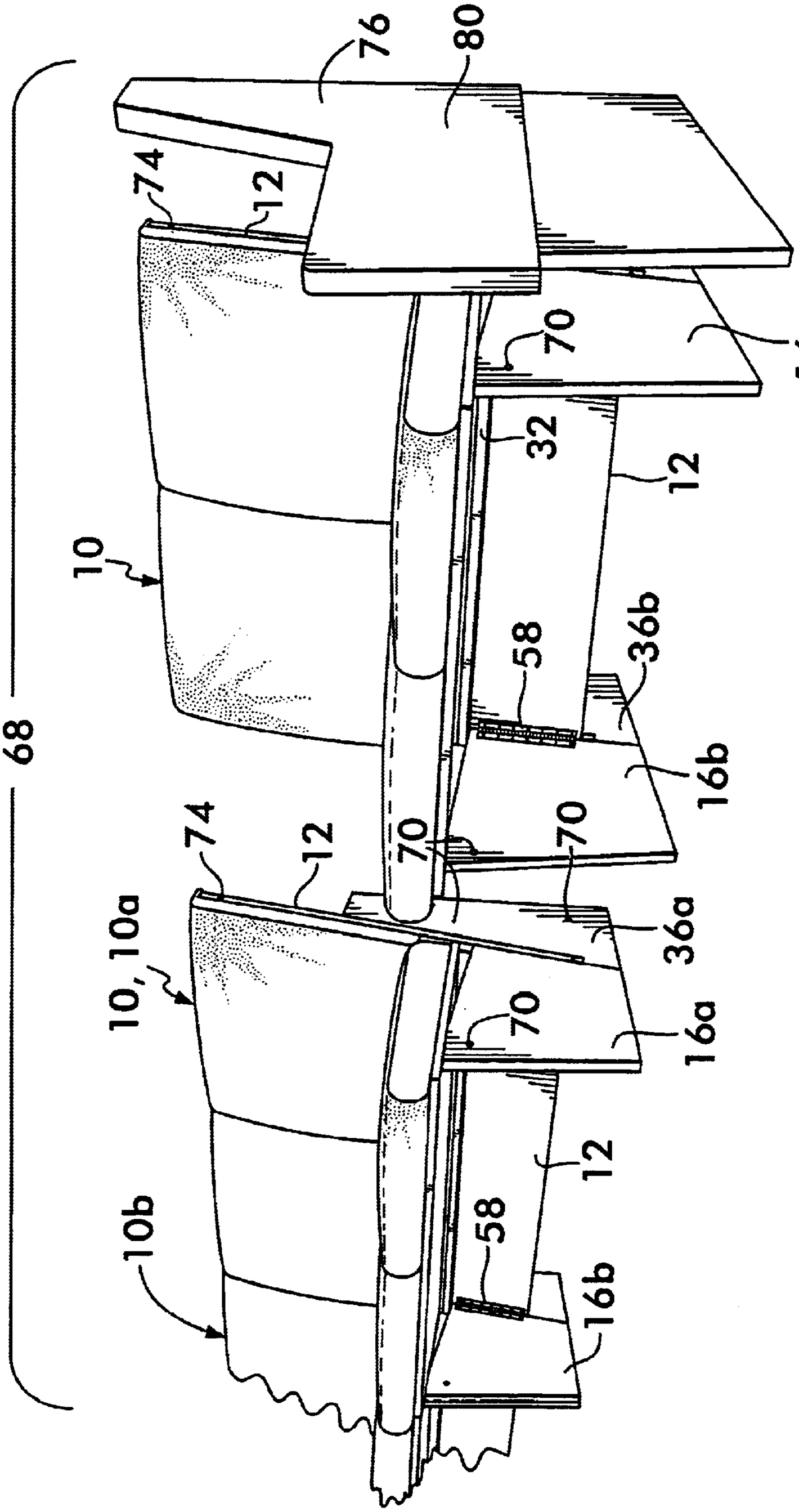


FIG.6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16b

FIG. 7

FIG. 7A

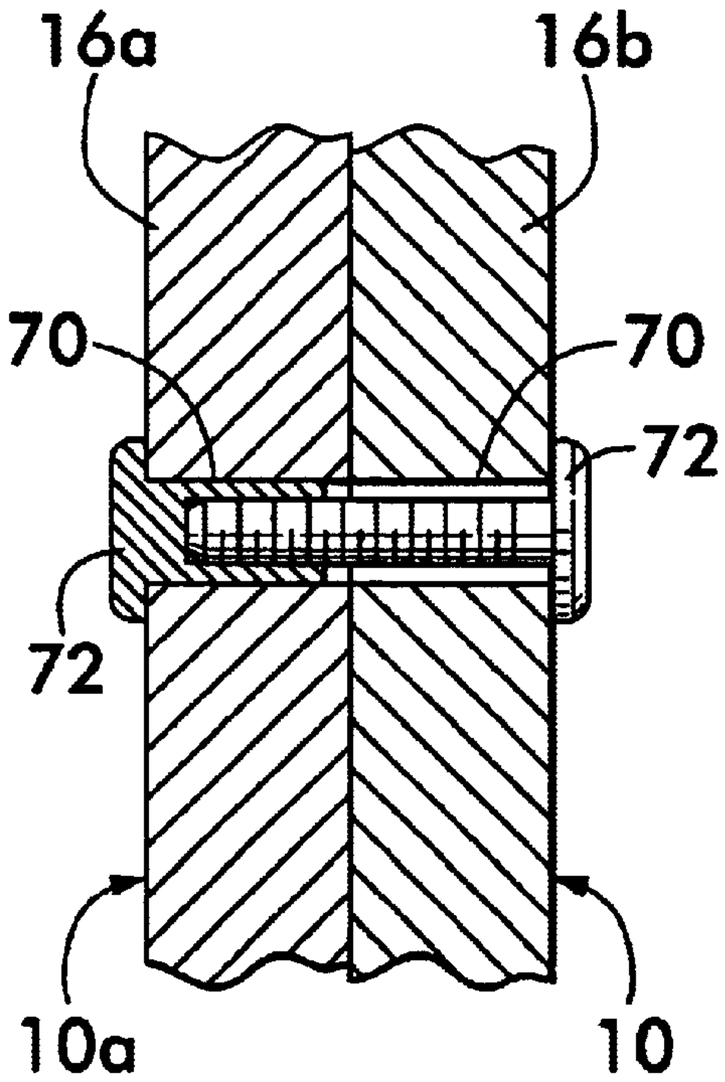
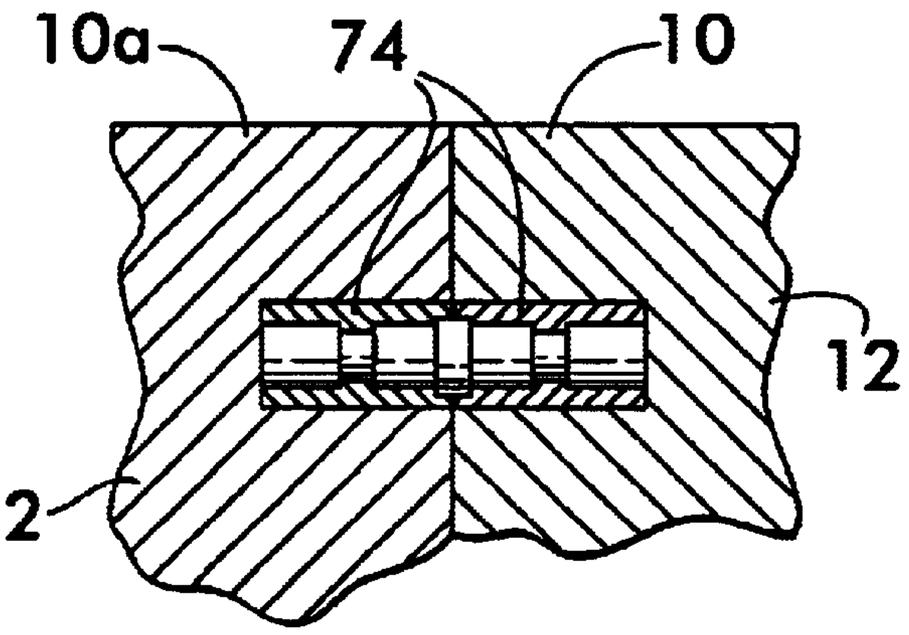


FIG. 7B



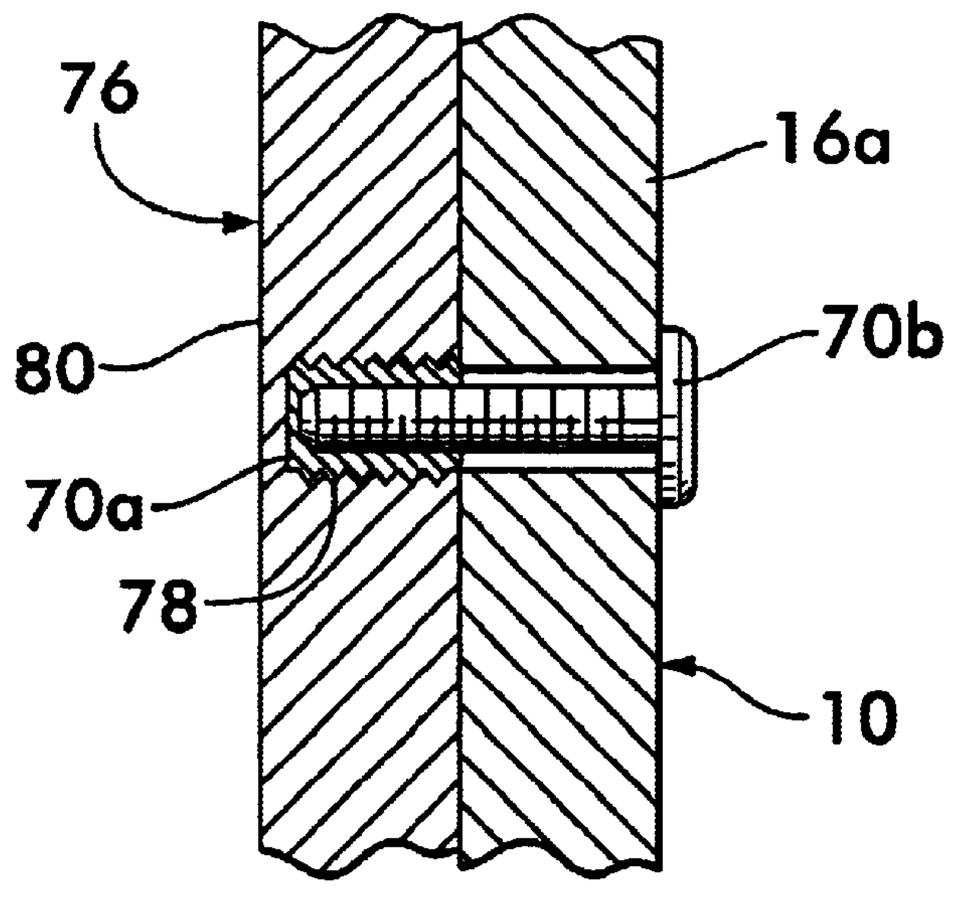


FIG. 7C

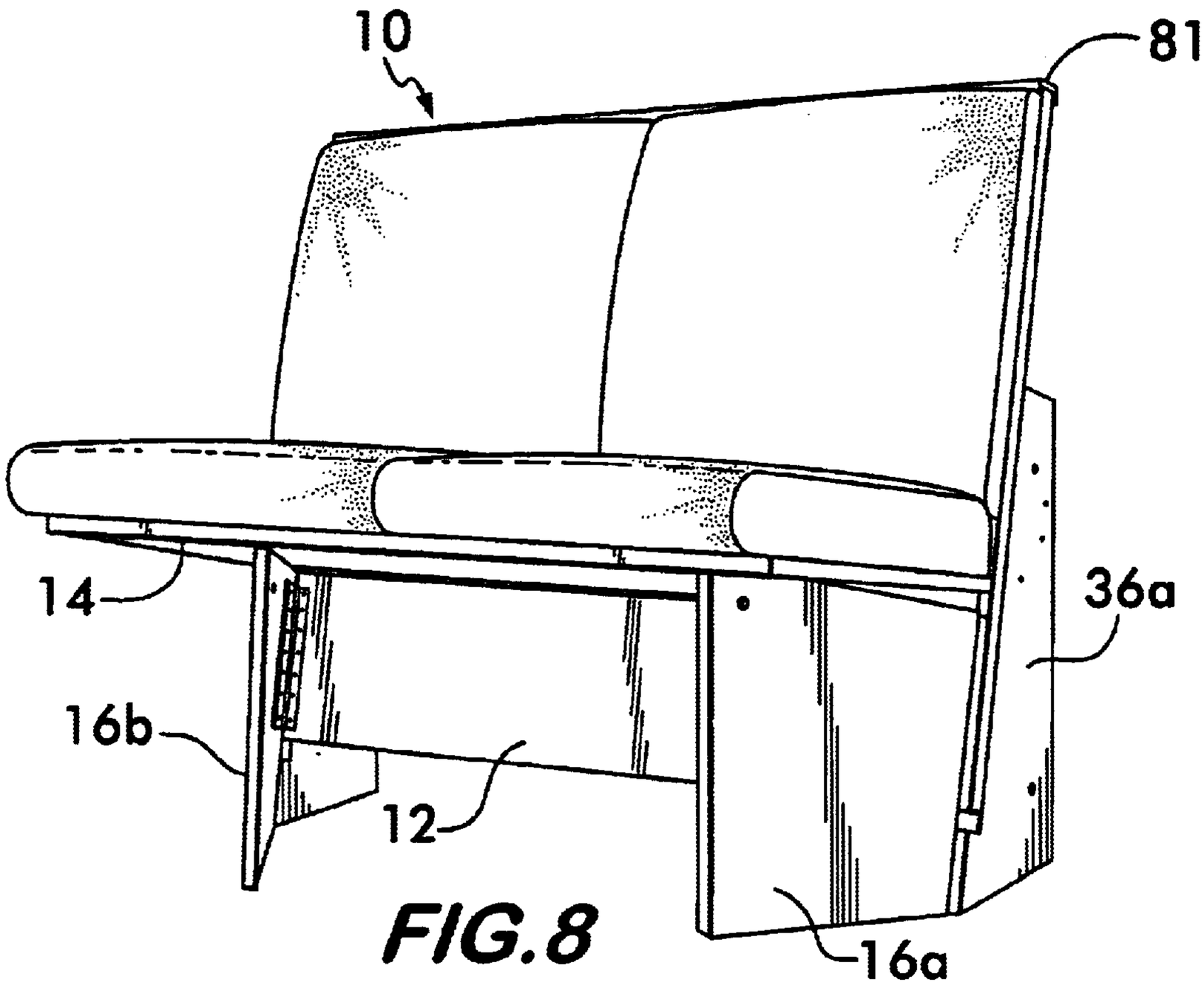


FIG.8

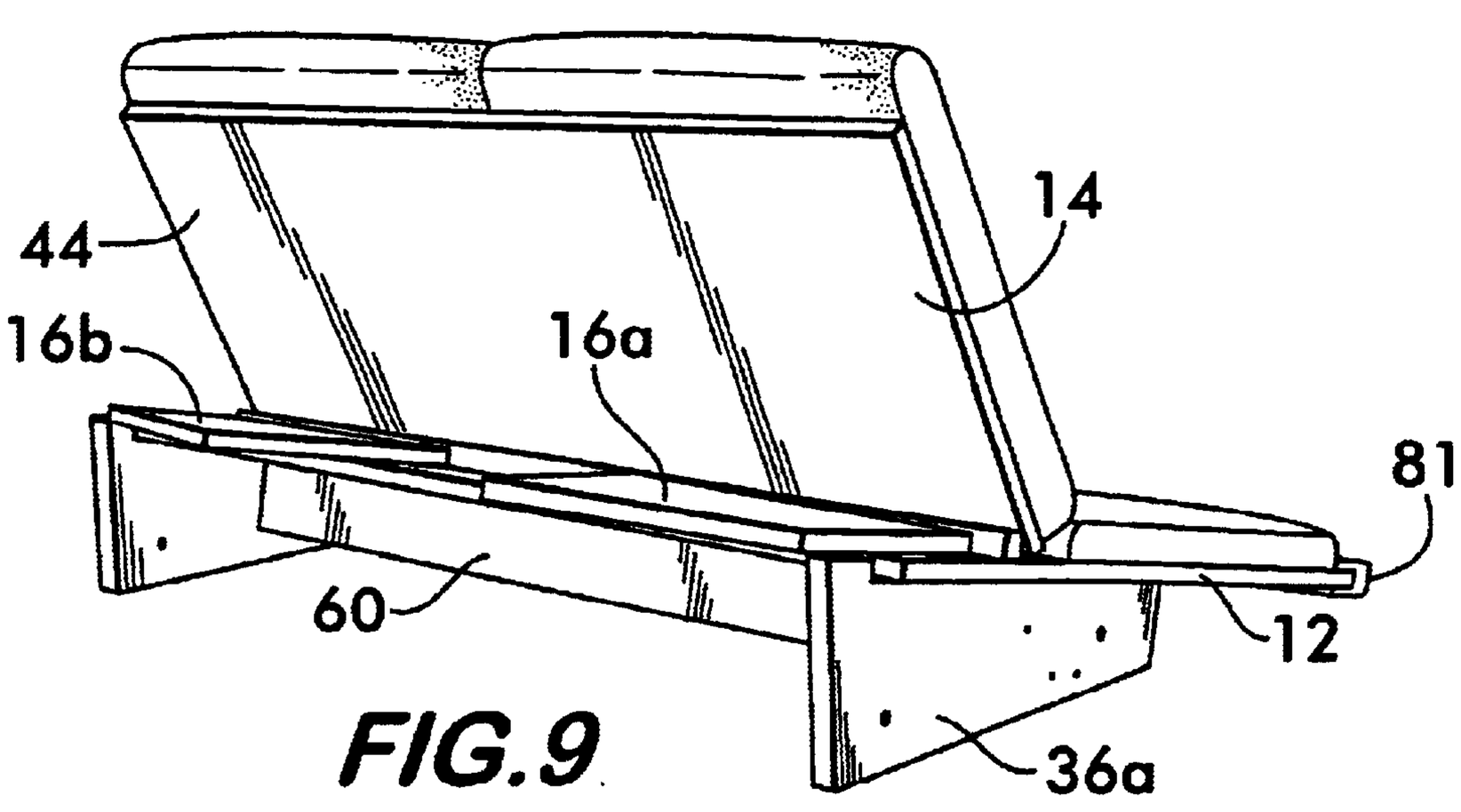
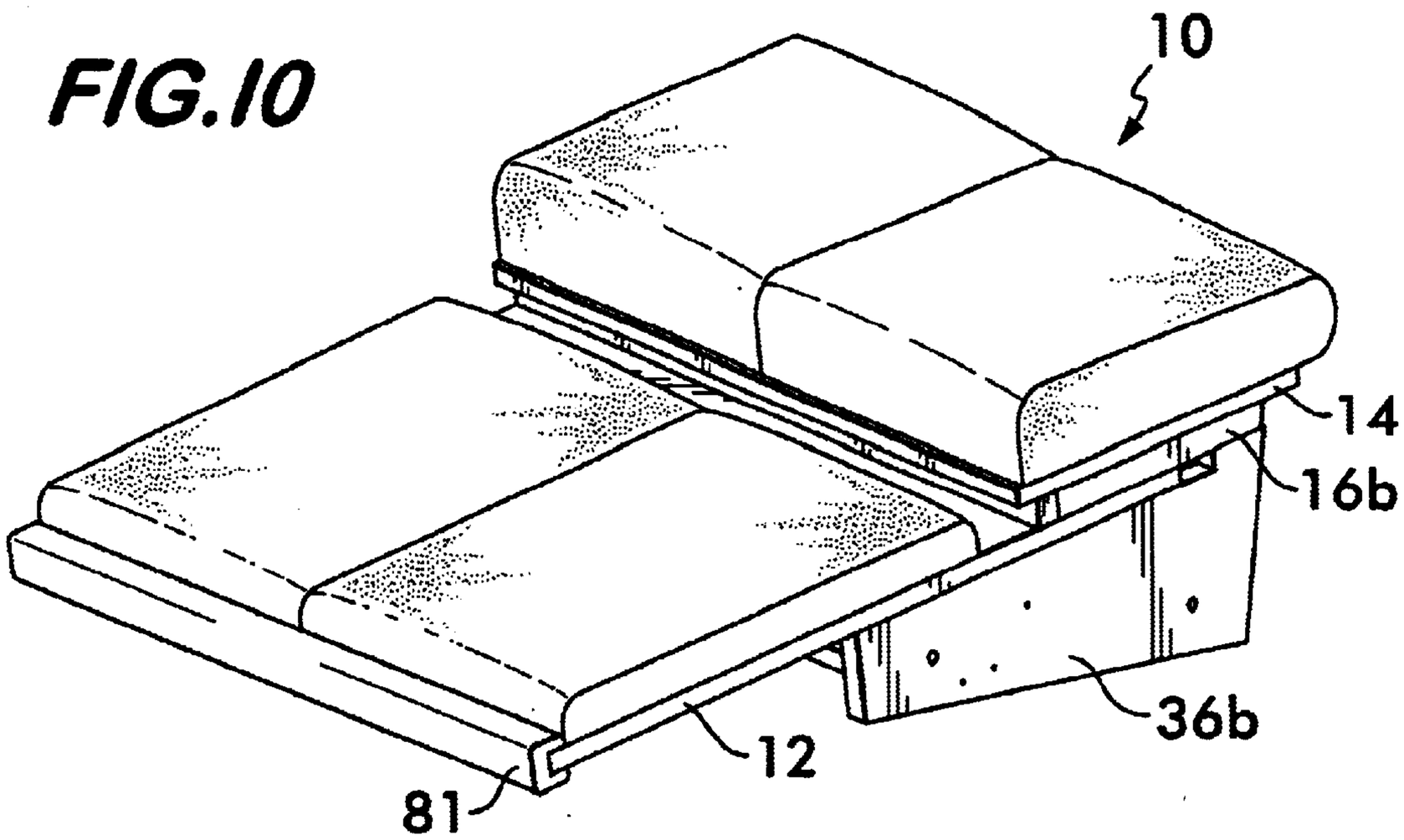


FIG.9

FIG.10



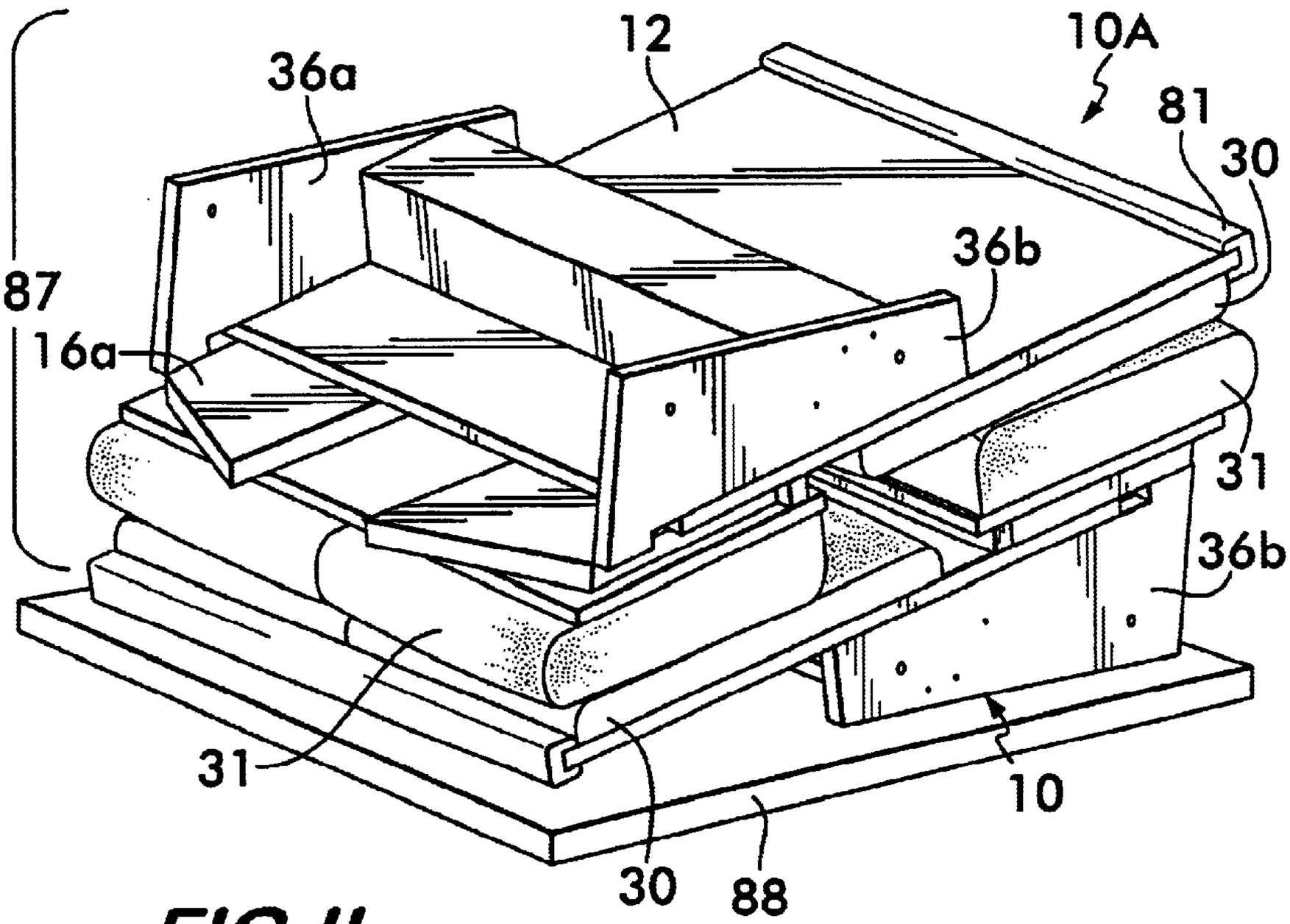
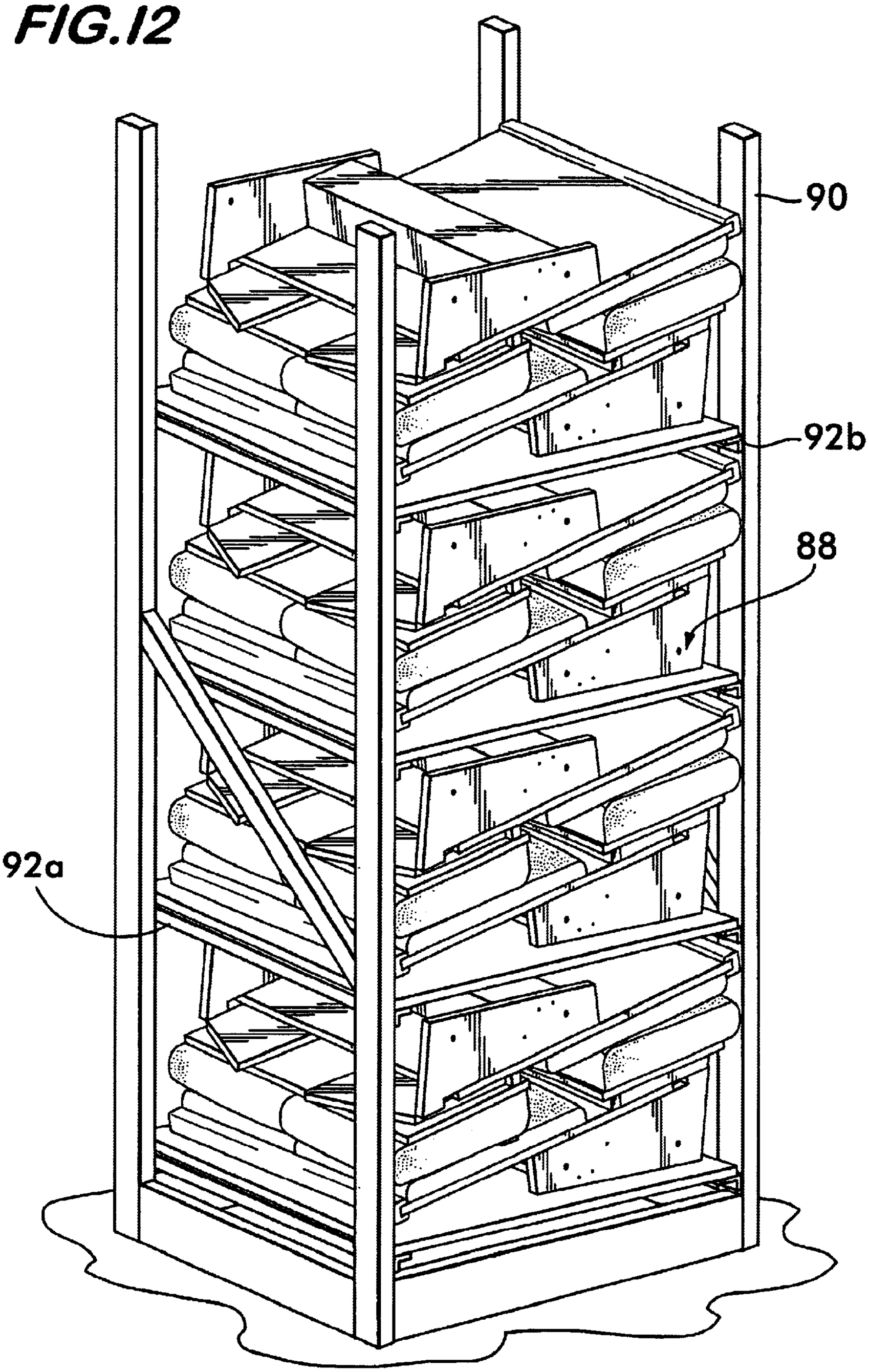


FIG.11

FIG.12



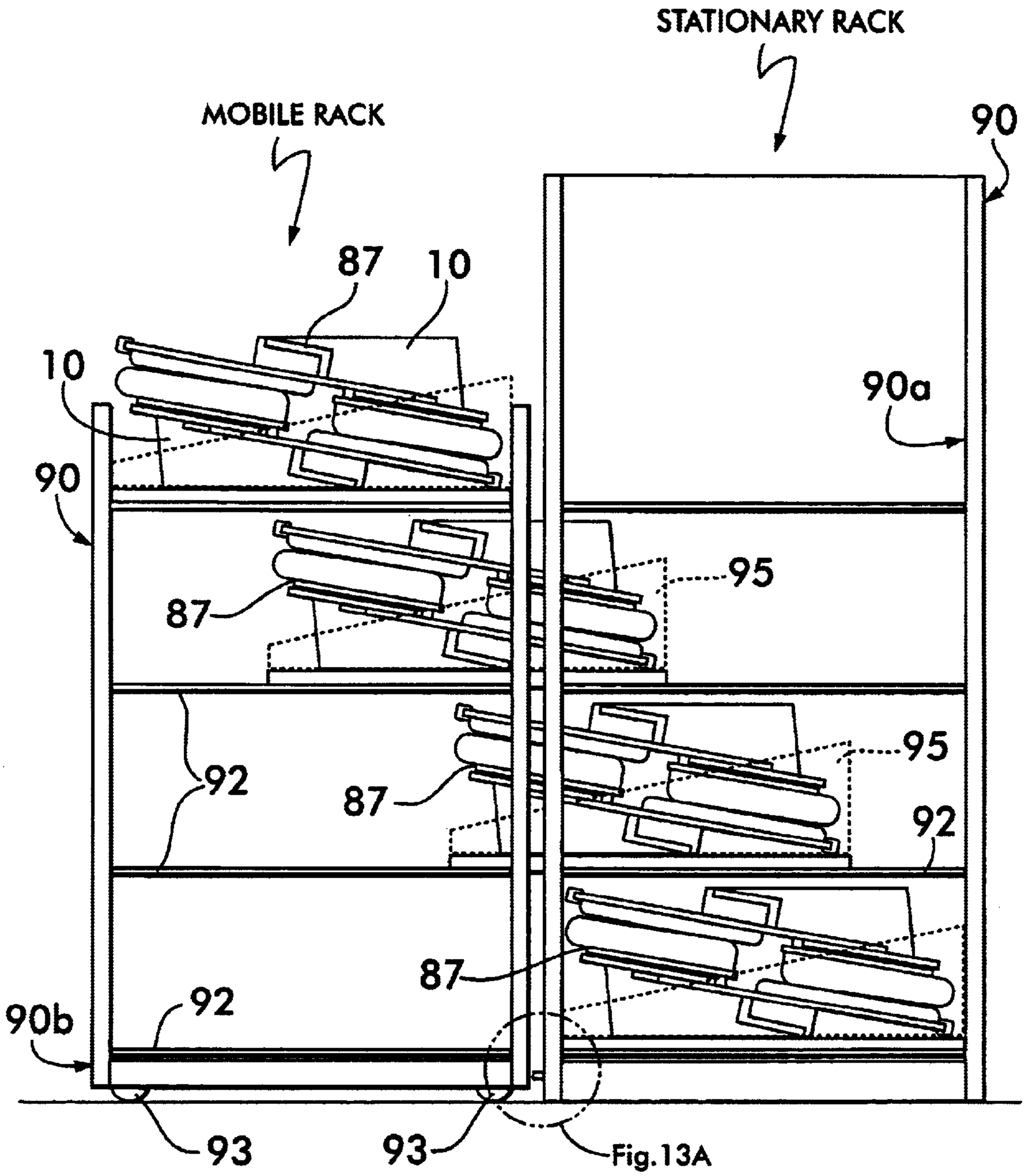
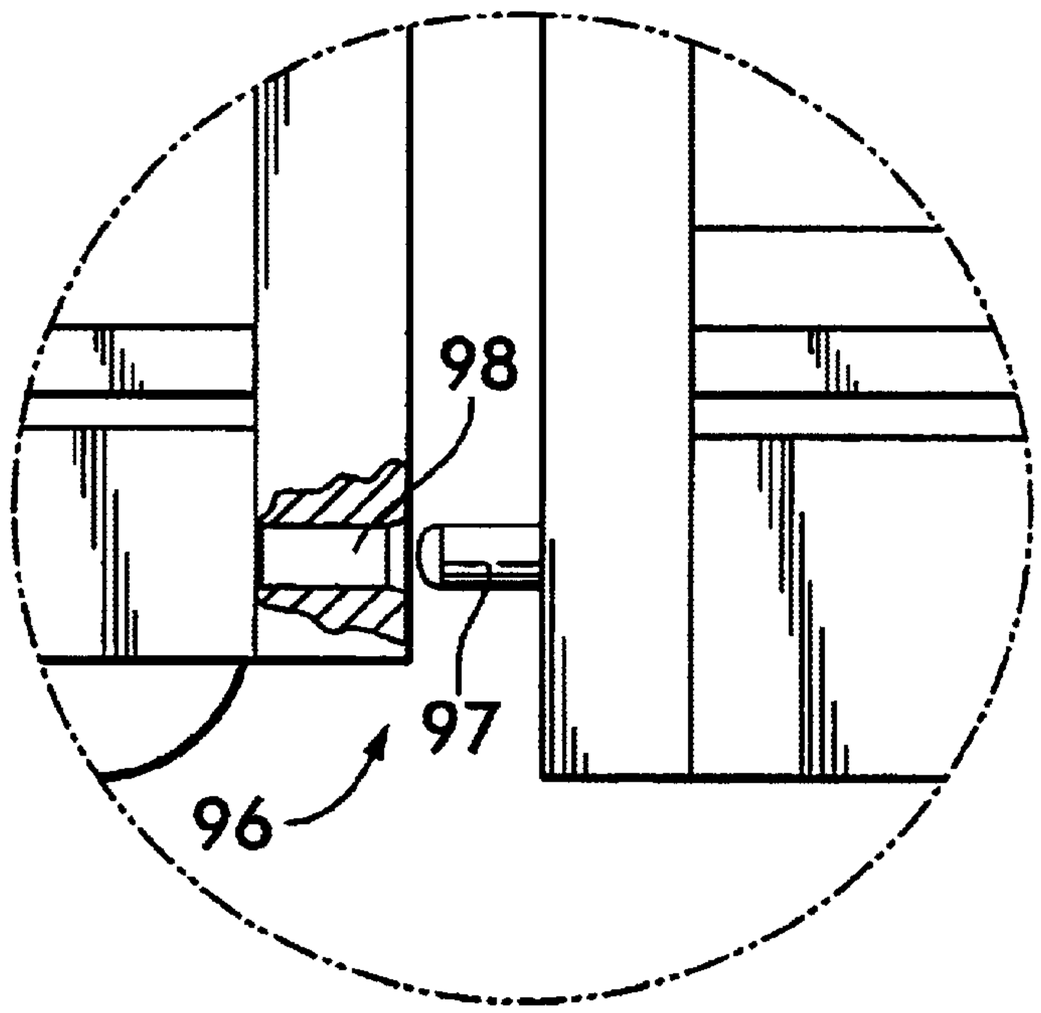


FIG.13

FIG. 13A



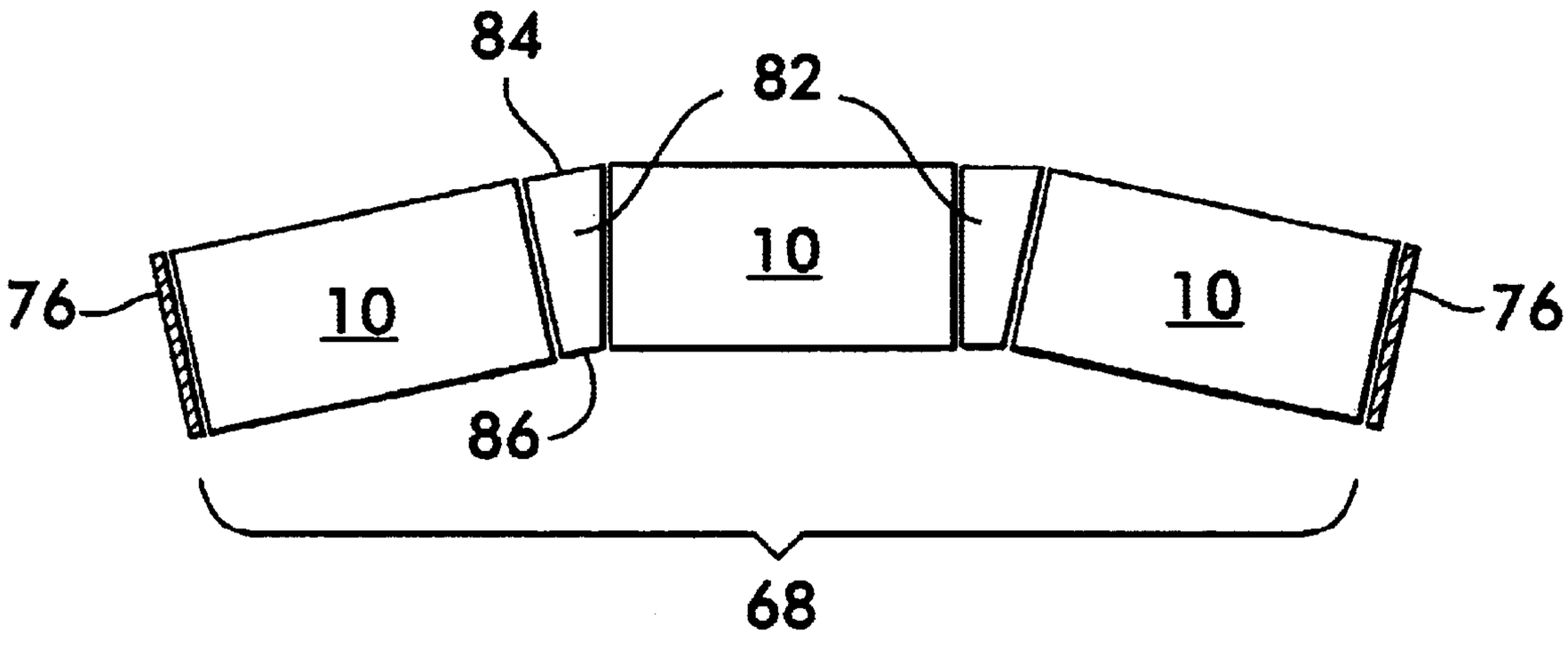


FIG. 15

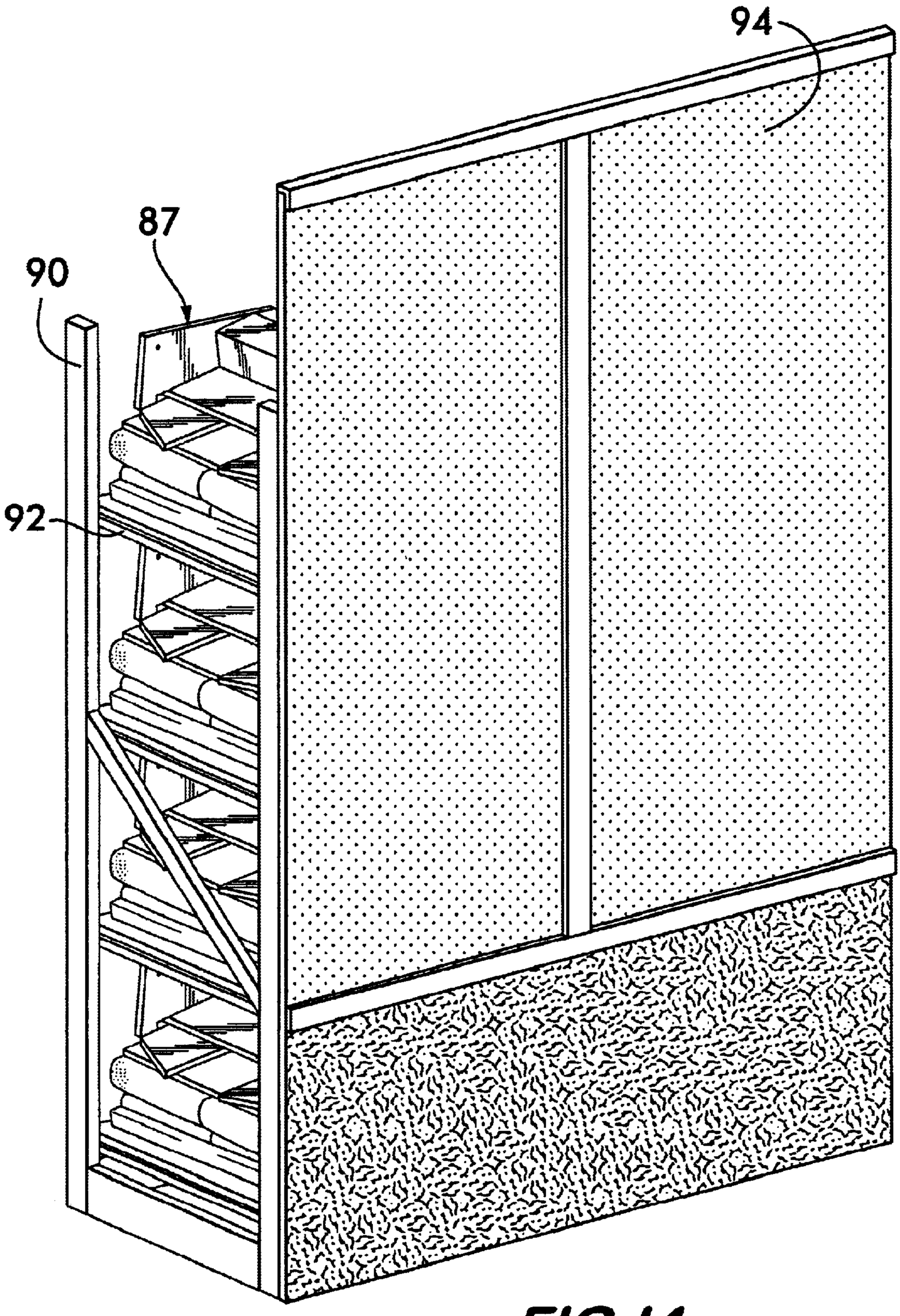


FIG.14

FOLDING SEAT MODULE SYSTEM AND METHOD OF USING SAME

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

This application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application No. 60/328,042 filed Oct. 9, 2001, and U.S. Provisional Application No. 60/342,928 filed Oct. 19, 2001, both of which are hereby incorporated by reference.

BACKGROUND

1. Field of the Invention

The invention relates to modular furniture, and more particularly to foldable modular seats.

2. Background of the Invention

Permanent seating is used in many settings to provide a classic or elegant look. For example, pews in the sanctuaries of religious institutions are designed to provide a reverent look. Such seating is typically made of wood and aesthetically designed to help create the atmosphere desired for the particular use.

Many institutions that use such seating, particularly religious institutions, have a given number of seats or pews permanently mounted to the floor. When additional seating is needed for expected overflow, such as for holidays or special occasions, additional seating is provided with portable folding seats set up in areas adjacent to the permanent seats, such as in an adjacent room separated from the main room by a removable wall.

Unfortunately, typical portable seats do not match the permanent seats or provide the atmosphere desired. With pews in particular, which provide rows of connected seating, individual portable seats which generally hold a single person provide a second class look and feel. Moreover, portable seating lacks many of the functions and features of the permanent seats such as book shelves located on the back of pews that conveniently hold books and other materials for those in the row of seats immediately behind.

Accordingly, it is an object of the present invention to provide portable seating that can better match the aesthetic look of the permanent seats.

Another object is to provide portable seating that can is connectable to provide a row of seats.

A further object is to provide portable seating that can be quickly set up or removed, and which can be efficiently stored.

Additional objects, advantages and novel features of the invention will be set forth in part in the description which follows, and in part will become apparent to those skilled in the art upon examination of the following or may be learned by practice of the invention.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention, in one aspect, provides a portable seating system that includes at least two seat modules. Each of the seat modules is foldable between an upright position for seating and a folded position for storage, and each has a back support member, a seat member pivotally movable relative to the back support member for rotation between the upright position and the folded position about a generally longitudinal axis, the seat member being in a position for use as a seat when the module is in the upright position and folded downward towards the bottom of the seat module when in the folded position. Each seat module further has a pair of end supports spaced from one another, each of the pair of end supports being positioned to support the seat member when the module is in its upright position, and foldable to a position under the seat member to allow the seat member to move to the folded position when the module is in its folded position. The seat modules are connectable to one another when in the upright position to form a connected row of such seat modules.

In another aspect, the present invention provides a method for providing portable seating. The method includes the following:

A) setting up a row of seats by 1) providing at least two seat modules, wherein each of the seat modules has at least two seats, and each of the modules is foldable between an upright position for use, and a folded position wherein the seat modules are folded to a compact form, 2) connecting at least two of the seat modules in the upright position to form the row of seat modules; and

B) removing the row of seats by 1) disconnecting the connected seat modules from one another, and 2) folding the seat modules to the compact form.

A portable seat module foldable between an upright position for seating and a folded position for storage is also provided.

Means for storing the folded seat modules is also provided. In particular, stationary racks and wheeled racks are provided. In another embodiment, a rack having a decorative panel to mask the seat modules stored on it is provided.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

These and other features, aspects, and advantages of the present invention will become better understood with reference to the following description, appended claims, and accompanying drawings where:

FIG. **1** is a front perspective view of a seat module in accordance with the present invention;

FIG. **2** is a side view of the seat module of FIG. **1**;

FIG. **3** is a bottom perspective view of the seat module of FIG. **1**;

FIG. **4** is a side-rear perspective view of the seat module of FIG. **1**;

FIG. **5** is a front view of the module of FIG. **1** shown with the end supports folded;

FIG. **6** is a side perspective view of the seat module of FIG. **1** shown in the folded position;

FIG. **7** is perspective view of seat modules being connected to form a row of seats;

FIG. **7**A is a cross sectional detailed view showing a bolt connection of a seat module to another seat module;

FIG. **7**B is a cross sectional detailed view showing the snap connection between two seat modules;

FIG. **7**C is a cross sectional detailed view showing a bolt connection of an end panel to a seat module;

FIG. **8** is a front perspective view of an individual seat module of FIG. **7** being folded;

FIG. **9** is a front perspective view of the seat module of FIG. **8** during the folding process;

FIG. **10** is a front perspective view of the seat module of FIG. **9** fully folded;

FIG. **11** is a perspective view of two seat modules nested together for storage;

FIG. **12** is perspective view of a group of folded seat modules stored on a storage rack;

FIG. **13** is a perspective view of a portable storage rack adjacent a stationary storage rack with seat modules on trays being transferred from one rack to the other;

FIG. **13**A is the detail **13**A shown in FIG. **13**;

FIG. **14** is perspective view of a storage rack having a decorative panel; and

FIG. **15** is a schematic view looking down on a curvilinear row of seat modules.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Illustrated and described herein is a preferred embodiment of the invention suitable for use in a religious setting. It is understood, however, that the present invention is not so limited, and can be used in other settings as well.

With reference to FIGS. **1**, **2**, **3** and **4**, a pew for use in a religious sanctuary such as a church or synagogue is illustrated. A seat module **10** has a back support member **12** (FIG. **2**), a seat member **14** sized to seat two people as shown, and a pair of end supports **16***a*, **16***b*. For purposes of orientation, the seat module **10** has a front side **18** (FIG. **2**), a back side **20**, and right and left sides **22**, **24** respectively, as viewed from the front of the seat module **10** (FIG. **1**). It also has a top side **17** and bottom side **19** that rests on the floor.

For this particular embodiment, the back support member **12** is formed as a singular flat wooden panel extending between the side ends **22**, **24** as shown, and has a top edge **26** and a bottom edge **28**. The bottom edge **28** extends below the seat member **14**, but is raised above the ground a suitable distance as shown (FIGS. **1** and **4**) to provide foot room for people seated behind the module **10**. Back cushions **30** and seat cushions **31** provide added comfort and are secured to the respective back and seat members by any suitable means, e.g., velcro, bolts, etc. An alternative design for the top edge **26** of the back support **12** is shown in FIGS. **8** and **9**, a wooden cap **81** that extends above the back cushion.

Attached to the back support member **12** is a support bar **32**. Having a generally rectangular cross section, the support bar **32** extends longitudinally across the front side **34** of back support member **12** between right and left sides **22**, **24** and is positioned to support the rear end **35** of the seat member **14** as can be seen in FIGS. **2** and **3**.

Extending rearward from both sides **22**, **24** of back support **12** are back extensions **36***a*, **36***b*. The bottom edge **38** of each extension **36***a*, **36***b* rests on the floor as shown and helps support the module **10** in the upright position, acting as legs to support the seat module **10** in cooperation with the end supports **16***a*, **16***b* which also act as legs. The extensions **36***a*, **36***b* have a cut out **40** (FIG. **2**), the back support member **12** attaching to the extensions **36***a*, **36***b* in the cut out **40**. Here, the extensions **36***a*, **36***b* are formed of a flat panel-like piece.

The seat member **14** is moveable relative to the back support **12** between an upright position for use and a folded position for storage (see FIGS. **1** and **10**). In the illustrated embodiment, the seat member **14** is pivotally attached near its rear side **35** to the back support member **12** through the support bar **32**. Any suitable attachment means may be used. Here the seat member **14** is attached to the back support member **12** via a piano hinge **42** having one leaf of the hinge screwed to the underside **44** of the seat member **14** and the other leaf to the support bar **32**. It is seen that the piano hinge **42** allows the seat member **14** to be rotated or folded about a longitudinal axis **46** (FIG. **5**) between the upright position shown in FIGS. **1** and **2** where the seat member **14** is in a generally horizontal seating position for use and a folded position shown in FIGS. **6** and **10** which is further described below. The illustrated seat member **14** is formed of a singular flat wooden panel.

The end supports **16***a*, **16***b* are spaced from one another on either side of the module **10**, each having a front edge **48**, rear edge **50**, bottom edge **52**, and top edge **54**. The bottom edge **52** is parallel with the bottom edge **38** of the extensions **36***a*, **36***b*, resting on the floor and acting as legs to support the module **10**. The top edge **54** of each support **16***a*, **16***b* includes a seat support section **56** (FIG. **2**) for contacting and supporting the underside **44** of the seat member **14** in its upright seating position. Here, the top edge **54** supports the front section of the seat member **14** as shown, which, in cooperation with the support bar **32** and piano hinge **42** supporting the rear section, provides a sturdy support for the seat member **14**. Here the end supports **16***a*, **16***b* are formed of singular flat panels of wood-like material.

Each end support **16***a*, **16***b* is movably attached to the remainder of the seat module **10** so as to be movable to a position that allows the seat member **14** to be folded to form a generally flat module **10** for storage as illustrated in FIG. **10**. In the illustrated embodiment, the seat member **14** can be folded downward towards the floor or bottom side **19** (as oriented in FIG. **1**) after the end supports **16***a*, **16***b* are folded out of the way. Here, each end support **16***a*, **16***b* is pivotally attached near its rear edge **50** to the back support member **12** at opposite sides of the back support **12** for pivotal movement about an axis generally perpendicular to the longitudinal axis **46**. This is accomplished with a piano hinge **58** screwed to the respective members as shown, which provides the desired movability and which is of suitable length to provide a sturdy attachment to the back support member **12** for a sturdy and safe seat module **10** when in use. As one possible alternative to pivotal attachment near the rear edge **50**, it is contemplated that the end supports **16***a*, **16***b* could be pivotally attached near the top edge **54** of each end support **16***a*, **16***b* to the underside **44** of the seat member **14** so that the bottom edge of each end support could fold upwards towards the center of the underside **44** of the seat member **14**. This would likewise allow the end supports to be folded so as to permit the folding downward of the seat member **14**.

With reference to FIG. **4**, it is seen that a book rack **60** is readily provided along the back side of the module **10**, here the rack **60** being attached in a known manner between and to the opposing sides of the extensions **36***a*, **36***b*.

Having been described in its upright form as used for seating, the seat module **10** will now be described in its folded position which allows for convenient storage in a compact form. Moreover, the folding process allows convenient and quick assembly and disassembly of the seat modules for use or storage. With reference to FIG. **5** (the module **10** shown leaning backwards), the seat member **14** has been manually lifted upwards a sufficient distance to allow the folding of each of the end supports **16***a*, **16***b* about the piano hinges **58** in the directions **62***a*, **62***b* toward the center of the module **10** (the directions **62***a*, **62***b* also shown in FIG. **3**), with the inside faces **64** of the end supports **16***a*, **16***b* coming to rest on the front side **34** of a lower section of the back support member **12** beneath where the seat member **14** attaches to the back support member **12** (via support bar **32**). Next, the seat member **14** is folded downward about the longitudinal axis **46** defined by the piano hinge **42** to be on top of the outer faces **65** of the end supports **16***a*, **16***b*, thereby becoming generally parallel with the back support member **12** as shown in FIGS. **6** and **10** to complete the

folding process. It is seen that the end supports **16***a*, **16***b* are sandwiched between the seat member **14** and the lower section of the back support member **12**.

One advantage of the present invention is that multiple seat modules **10** can be interconnected to form a row of modules. Multiple rows of such modules can be created to provide as much seating as desired. This is ideal for portable or temporary seating in churches and synagogues where additional temporary seating beyond the permanent pews is needed, and where it is desired to add seating that maintains the reverent look of the existing pews. It is appreciated that the modules **10** of the present invention can be made from any suitable material, wood being typical of religious settings, and can be designed for a particular look or to match the design of existing pews.

As illustrated in FIG. **7**, connection of several modules **10** to one another is possible to create a row **68** of as many seats as desired. The up righted modules **10**, **10***a*, **10***b* are placed adjacent one another as shown. Two bolt openings **70** (FIG. **4**) in each of the back extensions **36***a*, **36***b* and one bolt opening **70** in each of the end supports **16***a*, **16***b* allow one module **10** to be connected to an adjacent module **10***a*, e.g., extension **36***a* and end support **16***a* of one module **10***a* is bolted to the adjacent extension **36***b* and end support **16***b* of another module **10**. As shown in FIG. **7**A showing a detail of the end support **16***b* of one module **10** connected to the end support **16***a* of the module **10***a*, male and female bolt sections **72** with heads for easy handling are preferred, although any suitable fastener may be used. To further aid in the alignment and connection of the individual modules **10** and **10***a*, registration pins or cooperating snap assemblies **74** (see FIG. **2** and FIG. **7**B) can be provided in the side end of the back supports **12**. This helps keep the back supports **12** aligned with one another.

If desirable, the rows can be anchored to the floor for added stability.

Where a more finished or complete look is desired, end panels **76** can be provided for the two opposite ends of the row **68** (see FIG. **7**). The end panel **76** of a desired design can be connected to the ends of the row **68**, i.e., the unconnected ends of the seat modules at the end of the row **68**, using the same bolt holes **70** and snap-ins **74** used to connect two seat modules **10** to each other. For example, with reference to FIG. **7**C, the three holes **70** on the end of the module **10** align with three recesses **78** in the end panel **76**. A female fastener piece **70***a* is screwed into the recess of the end panel **76** for receiving the male end of a bolt **70***b*, providing an attachment means invisible on the outer face **80** of the end panel **76**. A pin or snap can also be provided in the end panel **76** to connect with the corresponding piece **74** on the seat module **10**. Such end panels **76** can take on different aesthetic designs for different uses. In the illustrated embodiment, the end panel **76** provides a similar look as an end piece of a permanent pew, and provides a panel section higher then the seat member **14** to act as an end or stop to prevent users from sliding off the end of the seat module **10**, and can also provide an arm rest.

It is seen that the embodiment illustrated in the FIGS. provides at least four point support above the floor. For example, with reference to FIGS. **1** and **2**, it is seen that the bottom side **19** of the seat modules **10** contacts the floor in multiple places along the bottom edge **38** of the extensions **36***a*, **36***b* and the bottom edge **52** of the end supports **16***a*, **16***b*. This provides a stable support of the module **10**.

Rows of various shapes are also possible. For example, with reference to FIG. **15**, an intermediate member or spacer **82** can be connected between adjacent modules **10**, using the fastening means as described above, to form the desired shape of the row **68**. By controlling the shape of the spacer **82**, a curve can be added to the row **68** as shown. Thus various shaped rows are possible, including straight, angled and curvilinear. For example, the width of the rear panel **84** of the spacer **82** as compared to the width of the front panel **86** can be selected for the desired degree of curvature. Likewise, the height of the spacer **82** could be higher than the seat member **14** to act as an end of each module **10** or as a stop to prevent the user from sliding off the seat member **14**. Such spacers are disclosed in my U.S. Patent Application 60/342,928 filed Oct. 19, 2001 and which is hereby incorporated by reference. It is understood that the spacers need not be shaped to provide a curvature to the row, but can be simple spacers. For example, a non wedge shaped intermediate member **84** similar to the end panel **76** may be used to provide a spacing between modules or even to act as an intermediate, divider, or end panel for the individual seat modules **10**.

An advantage of the present invention is the ease with which the seat modules **10** can be up righted for use, and then disconnected, folded and stored for later use. This sequence from the setting up of the seating modules to the folding and storage of the modules is now described with reference to FIGS. **7** through **12**.

The up righting and connection of multiple modules **10** to create rows **68** of seats is completed as described above with reference to FIG. **7**. Once the need for the seats has passed, the seats are then folded and stored for future use. To disassemble the row, the fasteners connecting the various modules **10** and end panels **76** are disconnected, e.g., unbolting the bolts **72** and breaking the snap connections **74** between the modules **10** and end panels **76**.

The individual modules **10** are then folded to a generally flat configuration where the seat member **14** is generally parallel to the back support **12**. As shown in FIGS. **5** and **8**, the seat member **14** is lifted up slightly to allow the end supports **16***a*, **16***b* to be folded inward toward the center of the module **10**, coming to rest on the lower portion of the back support **12**. With further reference to FIG. **9**, the seat member **14** is then lowered, pivoting about the longitudinal axis **46** of piano hinge **42**, the underside of the seat member **14** coming to rest on the outer face of the folded end supports **16***a*, **16***b* as seen in FIGS. **6** and **10**. This forms the generally flat configuration as shown in FIGS. **6** and **10**.

A second folded module **10***a* can be placed on top of the module **10** to form a nested arrangement **87** as shown in FIG. **11** for efficient storage. The folded modules **10** can be stored individually or in the nested arrangement **87** on trays **88** as now described with reference to FIG. **12**.

Efficient storage of the modules **10** is provided with racks **90** having shelves **92** onto which the trays **88** can be slid. The shelves **92** can be formed of two members **92***a*, **92***b* on opposite sides of the rack **90** and made of any suitable structural material capable of supporting the trays **88**, e.g., two lengths of angled steel having a flat surface on which the trays slide, etc. A low friction surface is preferably provided on the shelves **92**, such as rollers or low friction tape to allow easy sliding of the trays **88** on the shelves **92**. The preferred embodiment has four shelves for holding eight modules **10** in nested configurations. The racks **90** can be located in any place where it is desired to store the modules **10**.

With reference to FIG. **13**, it is appreciated that the racks **90** can be provided with wheels **93** to be easily movable (portable). This allows multiple modules to be moved

together to the area where they will be set up or stored after being folded, thereby minimizing the labor involved with set up and disassembly. It is further appreciated that a combination of non wheeled racks (permanent storage racks **90***a*) and portable racks **90***b* can be used. For example, a suitable number of permanent storage racks **90***a* can be provided in the area desired for storage. One or two portable racks **90***b* with wheels **93** can be provided to move the seat modules **10** from the area where they were used to the storage area. As shown in FIGS. **13** and **13**A, the portable rack **90***b* is moved next to the stationary rack **90***a* where the trays **88** can be slid from the shelves **92** of the portable rack to the shelves **92** of the stationary rack. With further reference to FIG. **13**A, a registration system **96** whereby a pin **97** on one rack is inserted into an opening **98** of the other rack insures proper alignment of the shelves for easy transfer. To remove the modules **10** from storage to the site intended for use, the above process is reversed. FIG. **13** also shows that the trays can have protective side panels **95** (shown in dotted line) to protect the modules **10** during storage.

The present invention further provides a storage means that masks the rack **90** and seat modules **10** therein from view. With reference to FIG. **14**, a rack **90**, wheeled or stationary, has a decorative panel **94** mounted on the back face of the rack **90** opposite from the side on which the modules **10** are slid onto the shelves **92**. The panel can be designed to match the design of the room in which the racks will be placed. Multiple such racks **90** with decorative panels **94** can be placed adjacent one another to form a wall like configuration behind which the modules **10** are stored. If wheeled to be portable, such racks are readily moved to where needed and then configured again to form the wall like structure masking the modules as desired.

It is appreciated that the present invention provides a novel seating module and a system of using such modules having numerous advantages. It can provide portable and temporary seating that can match or be similar to the permanent seating already in place. The modules are easily stacked and stored until needed, and then can be quickly and easily set up. While a two-seated module has been illustrated herein, it is appreciated that other size modules are possible—one seat modules, three seat modules, etc.

The system is also flexible. Various configurations are possible, from rows of multiple seat modules to rows of desired shapes. Because of the interchangeability of the system, quick repairs and or replacement of broken pieces is possible.

Other advantages, benefits and features are readily contemplated by those of ordinary skill in the art. While the illustrated embodiment is directed at pews, it is readily understood that the present invention is not so limited, and is applicable to other seating modules.

What is claimed is:

1. A portable seating system, comprising:

at least two seat modules, each of said seat modules being foldable between an upright position for seating and a folded position for storage, each of said seat modules having:

a back support member;

a seat member pivotally movable relative to said back support member for movement between said upright position and said folded position about a generally longitudinal axis, said seat member being in a position for use as a seat when said module is in said upright position and folded downward towards the bottom of the seat module when in said folded position;

a pair of end supports spaced from one another, each of said pair of end supports being positioned to support said seat member when said module is in its upright position, and foldable to a position under said seat member to allow said seat member to move to said folded position when said module is in its folded position; and

said seat modules being connectable to one another when in the upright position to form a row of said seat modules.

2. A portable seating system in accordance with claim **1** wherein said modules are connectable directly to one another at adjacent ends.

3. A portable seating system in accordance with claim **2** wherein said back support member comprises a single flat panel having first and second ends, and further comprises first and second back extensions extending rearward and having a bottom edge for cooperating with a bottom edge of said end supports to support said module above the floor when said module is in said upright position.

4. A portable seating system in accordance with claim **1** wherein said modules are connectable to one another via an intermediate member connectable directly to opposing ends of said two modules.

5. A portable seating system in accordance with claim **4** wherein said intermediate member is configured to form a curved row of connected seat modules.

6. A portable seating system in accordance with claim **4** wherein said intermediate member comprises a wedge shaped spacer so as to form a curved row of seat modules, said spacer having a front side and a back side, said back side having a width grater than a width of said front side.

7. A portable seating system in accordance with claim **1** further comprising a removable end panel connectable to a side end of one of said modules to form an end of said row.

8. A portable seating system in accordance with claim **1** wherein said seat member is attached pivotally to said back support member to be pivotal about a longitudinal axis extending from side to side of said module.

9. A portable seating system in accordance with claim **8** wherein said end supports are attached pivotally to said back support member such that a front end of said support can be folded toward said back support member.

10. A portable seating system in accordance with claim **8** wherein said seat member is attached pivotally to said back support member via a piano type hinge.

11. A portable seating system in accordance with claim **1** further comprising a storage rack for holding said seating modules when said seating modules are in the folded position, said rack having at least two shelves spaced vertically from one another.

12. A portable seating system in accordance with claim **1** wherein each of said seat modules comprise at least two seats.

13. A portable seating system in accordance with claim **1** wherein at least one of said seat modules has a book rack attached to a back side of said one seat module.

14. The portable seating system of claim **1** wherein each of said seat modules has at least four point support against the floor.

15. A portable seating system, comprising

multiple seat modules, each of said modules being foldable between an upright position for use, and a folded position wherein said seat modules are folded to a compact form for storage, said seat modules being connectable to one another when in the upright position to form a connected row of said seat modules having an end;

each of said seat modules having a back support member and a seat member pivotally moveable relative to said back support member, and a pair of end supports spaced from one another, each of said pair of end supports being positioned to support said seat member when said module is in its upright position, and foldable to a position under said seat member to allow said seat member to move to said folded position when said module is in its folded position; and

a removable end panel connectable to a side end of one of said seat modules at said end of said row, said end panel being disconnectable from said modules for storage.

16. A portable seating system in accordance with claim **15** wherein at least one of said seat modules is sized to comprise at least two seats.

17. A portable seating system in accordance with claim **15** further comprising a storage rack for holding said seating modules when said seating modules are in the folded position, said rack having at least two shelves spaced vertically from one another.

18. A portable seating system in accordance with claim **17** wherein said storage rack further comprises a decorative panel on a side of said rack masking any of said modules stored therein from a view from a side of said decorative panel opposite said shelves.

19. A portable seating system in accordance with claim **17** wherein said storage rack includes wheels to permit movement of said rack.

20. A portable seating system in accordance with claim **17** wherein said seat modules are stored in pairs of modules nested on top of one another.

21. A method of providing portable seating, said method comprising:

A) setting up a row of seats by carrying out the following steps:

1) providing at least two seat modules, each of said seat modules having at least two seats, each of said modules being foldable between an upright position for use, and a folded position wherein said seat modules are folded to a compact form;

2) connecting at least two of said seat modules in the upright position to form said row of said seat modules; and

B) removing said row of seats by carrying out the following steps:

1) disconnecting said connected seat modules from one another;

2) folding said seat modules to said compact form by folding a pair of end supports and a seat member, said end supports being spaced from one another and positioned to support said seat member when said seat module is in said upright position, said pair of end supports being folded to a position under said seat member to allow said seat member to move to a folded position relative to a back support member when said module is folded.

22. A method of providing portable seating in accordance with claim **21** wherein step A further comprises the step of connecting a removable end panel to a side end of one of said modules to form an end of said row, and step B further comprises the step of disconnecting said removable end panel.

23. A method of providing portable seating in accordance with wherein step B further comprises the steps of:

stacking at least two of said modules on top of each other;

placing said stacked modules on a shelf of a storage rack.

24. A method of providing portable seating in accordance with claim **21** wherein step A**(2)** comprises the step of connecting said at least two of said seat modules in the upright position to form said row of said seat modules via an intermediate member connected between said two seat modules.

25. A portable seat module foldable between an upright position for seating and a folded position for storage, said seat module comprising:

a back support member, said back support having first and second back extensions spaced from one another and having a bottom edge for contacting the floor and supporting said module above the floor when said module is in said upright position;

a seat member pivotally connected to said back support member for pivotal movement between said upright position and said folded position about a generally longitudinal axis, said seat member being in a generally perpendicular position relative to said back support member when said module is in said upright position and folded downward towards the bottom of the seat module generally parallel to said back support member when in said folded position;

a pair of end supports spaced from one another, each of said pair of end supports being positioned to contact the underside of said seat member to support said seat member when said module is in its upright position and having a lower end for contacting the floor and supporting said module above the floor when said module is in said upright position, each of said end supports being pivotally connected to said back support member along a line generally perpendicular to said longitudinal axis to a position under said seat member to allow said seat member to move to said folded position wherein a bottom face of said seat member faces a side face of said end supports when said module is in its folded position; and

said seat module being connectable to another of said seat modules when in the upright position to form a connected row of said seat modules.

26. A portable seat module in accordance with claim **25** further comprising a removable end panel connectable to a side end of said module to form an end of said seat module, said end panel extending above said seat member to provide a stop for users sitting in said module.

* * * * *

UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

CERTIFICATE OF CORRECTION

PATENT NO. : 6,874,850 B2
DATED : April 5, 2005
INVENTOR(S) : Michael Berkowicz

It is certified that error appears in the above-identified patent and that said Letters Patent is hereby corrected as shown below:

Column 10,
Line 8, after "with", insert -- claim 21 --.

Signed and Sealed this

Twenty-eighth Day of June, 2005

JON W. DUDAS
Director of the United States Patent and Trademark Office